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ALEXANDER PETÓFI
CHILDE JOHN

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I.

The summer's sun descends with burning glow
Upon the hamlet's shepherd-lad below.
No need for it howe'er, he anyway
Feels warm enough without the sun's fierce ray.

The flame of love glows in his youthful soul;
A browsing herd is under his control.
His sheep-skin cloak he spreads upon the grass
Reclining on it he thinks of his lass.

Around him waves a sea of flowers bright,
The flowers though do not arrest his sight.
Stone's throw from him runneth a babbling brook
To which with eager eyes he casts his look.

He cares not for the brooklet's silver-sheen.
A fair blonde maid he on its shore hath seen,
He gazes at her figure full of grace,
Her flowing locks, round breast and beauteous face.

The maiden's skirt is rolled up to her knee,
--- Washing her linen sheets she would be free,
Her bare feet were a most inspiring sight
To Kukoricza John's heartfelt delight.

The shepherd lad, reclining on the lawn,
Who could he be? Our Kukoricza John!
In her, who in the brooklet laves her sheet,
Helen, his fond heart's pearly gem we greet.

„Pearl of my heart, my darling Helen, why“ —
John says to her, — „dost turn away thy eye?
Do look on me, beloved one, 'neath the sky
No other bliss or happiness have I.“

„Pray, turn to me thy blue eyes' loving ray,
Just for a moment, dear, thy work delay,
Come to the shore, that in a fond embrace
A soulful kiss I press on thy sweet face.“

„I'd gladly go, thou knowest, John, howe'er
I am in such a haste, I do not dare . . .
My mother is a stepmother and mean,
She'd scold me if with thee I would be seen.“

This was the answer fair, blonde Helen gave,
But never stopped her sheets with zeal to lave.
The shepherd rises then and coming near
Inticingly he pleads: „Helen, my dear,

„My turtle-dove, come here, do come to me.
One hug, one kiss, — that's all, — I want from thee.
Be not afraid, the old jade's far away,
Let not thy lover be his pining's prey.“

Thus he allured her with his dulcet speech,
Embraced her lovingly when in his reach;
He kissed her; once? Oh, no! God only knows
How many times he kissed his budding rose.

II.

Time swiftly flies, upon the brooklet's face
The setting sun the twilight's red displays.
The stepmother at home is furious, —
„Where is Helen?“ — her thoughts are ominous.

The mean old hag spoke to herself like this:
„I'll find out where that daughter of mine is.“
— And added, in a no wise pleasant mind:
„Woe her if idle she has been I find!“

Great woe is thine, Helen, poor orphan maid,
Beware! She's coming up to thee, the jade,
Her big mouth opes and with a piercing scream
Arouseth thee thus from thy sweet love's dream:

„Thou miserable wretch, vile shameless face,
„Is this the way thou dost thyself disgrace?
„With godless things to fool away the day!
„Did ever man!... Go home! — The devil may —

„Enough! Keep still, old hag, or else beware
Before you raise my wrath, and if you dare
Hurt Helen, or e'en with your speech abuse,
The teeth still left within your jaw you'll lose.“

His trembling love defending thus he had —
The gentle shepherd lad — grown truly mad.
On her tormentor casts an angry glance,
Then to this threat he giveth utterance:

„If you want not that I burn down your hut,
Make not heavier this poor orphan's lot.
Her work is hard, she is in constant dread,
And all she gets from you 's a crust of bread.“

„Now, Helen dear, go home, thou hast thy speech.
If she should maltreat thee, my help beseech!
And you, — old dame — you leave this girl alone,
You are yourself as a bad penny known.“

He picketh up his cloak, by his wrath stirred
He parts in haste to get back to his herd.
When lo! he finds that while he was away
Some of the sheep of his had gone astray.

III.

The sun already touched the earth when John
Could with the herd he had together drawn
Start toward home. Did wolves or did a thief
Pillage, while he away? Great is his grief.

Whatever caused his loss, — e'en if he knew,
It would not help, — there was one thing to do:
To tell the husbandman the truth; and so
He resolutely starts homeward to go.

„Woe be to thee," he to himself doth say,
As sad at heart he slowly wends his way.
„The master's anyhow a luckless wight,
And now this loss — but I will do what's right."

With thoughts like this a-preying on his mind
He reaches home, right at the gate to find
His irate host, to count, as wont, the drove
Ere John, each eve, them to their stable drove.

„Don't count them, Sir, you will miss more than one;
I can not hide the truth, the damage's done,"
— Said Kukoricza John — „my heart is sore,
God knows I wish I could the loss restore."

The owner took John's language as a joke,
Gave his moustache a twist: „Oho! provoke
Me not," he said in jesting-threat'ning tone,
„Thou art well off, leave well enough alone."

The truth howe'er was quick enough found out.
John's master, half insane, a mighty shout
Emits. Where is my pitch-fork?" is his cry,
„I'll run him through, right at this spot he'll die.

„Thief! Robber! Gallows-bird," he madly cries,
„The ravens should scratch out both of thy eyes.
Did I keep thee for this and feed thee too?
Quick for my iron fork, I'll run him through."

„Out of my sight! Let me see thee no more!"
John's master yells and curses foul he swore.
A mighty bar of iron is at hand,
With which he tries on John a blow to land.

Now Kukoricza John was not afraid,
No coward he, of sterner stuff was made:
O'er twenty in a fight had victor been,
Although but twenty winters he had seen.

Young, strong and bold, nevertheless he ran.
Not that he was afraid of his old man,
He knew that he'd done wrong, could he then stop
To fight the man he wronged, who brought him up?

He ran till his pursuer stopped to run,
Then only was he with his swift flight done,
And then he stopped, then staggered right and left, —
Then ran again as of his mind bereft.



IV.

When like a mirror shone the brooklet's face, —
Lit up by myriad stars' illuming rays, —
John found himself at Helen's garden gate,
How he got there, not he e'en could relate.

He stopped. Upon his reed-pipe then he blew,
The saddest, most heartrending tune he knew.
The dew drops on the blade o'grass and leaf
Were tears of stars which felt with him his grief.

Helen already slept. In summer nights
To sleep upon the front porch she delights.
She was aroused by the familiar tune,
She rose, goes down, and is at John's side soon.

She did not like his looks, she seemed affright,
This is her faltering speech made at his sight:
„What ails thee John, thou art so ghastly white
As is the moon on dismal autumn night?“

„Why should I not be pale? beloved one, hear?
Thy sweet face I no more shall see, I fear.“
„Oh, John, thy looks have frightened me enough,
For heaven's sake, talk not such foolish stuff.“

„My heart's fair springtide, we shall meet no more,
Nor will my reed again my woes outpour.
This is my last embrace, my good-bye kiss,
Forever I myself from here dismiss.“

The poor, ill-fated lad then tells her all,
Upon his weeping sweetheart's breast doth fall,
Caresses her, but turns away his eyes,
She must not see that he too freely cries.

„Dear, beauteous Helen, sweetest rose, good-bye!
Let now and then thy thoughts towards me fly.
If thou should'st see dry stalks by stormwind borne,
Think of thy roving lover from thee torn.“

„Dear John, good bye; go, if 'tis God's decree!
Each step in life thou makest He be with thee!
See'st thou a faded flower thrown away,
Think of thy sweetheart left here to decay.“

They parted as from tree-twigs parts the leaf,
Their hearts grew desolate, weighed down with grief.
Poor Helen weeps, the shower from her eyes
John with his flowing shirt-sleeves gently dries.

He started, never looked though where he went,
What did he care? To be gone his intent.
The crackling of the storks, the shepherds' song
He did not heed, but went his way headlong.

He left his home behind him long ago,
He saw no more the herdsmen's bonfires glow.
When once he stopped and turned to take a look,
The tower viewed him like a ghastly spook.

If any one then would have been near-by,
He could have heard him heave a heartfelt sigh.
The air is cleft by cranes which swiftly fly,
They do not hear him though, they were so high.

He jogged along into the silent night,
The ample fur coat round his shoulders quite
Distinctly flaps. The cloak is heavy, though
More weighty is his sore heart's awful woe.

V.

When dawn's first rays had caused the moon to flee
The prairy-heath spread 'fore him like a sea.
From east to the horizon's far off end:
Before him lies the broad and level land.

No bush, no tree, no blooming flower there,
A dewy blade o' grass is even rare.
The sun's first rays show at the right a mead,
Also a pond, though o'ergrown with reed.

Within the reed a long necked heron tries
To find its feed of toadlet, frog and flies.
Above the centre flits a fishing bird, —
Swift on its wing, — its cries are far off heard.

John jogged along, together with his shade
And with the dark thoughts which on his mind weighed.
The bright sun o'er the country sheds its light,
Within John's heart though all is darkest night.

The sun had reached the top a-spreading heat,
It then came to John's mind 'tis time to eat.
At noon, the day before, he'd eaten last;
Fatigued and hungry, thought to break his fast.

All worn out, — his feet could him hardly drag, —
Sat down, the rest of bacon from his bag
He ate. The bright sun looks at him from high,
A mirage views him with its fairy eye.

He had enjoyed his modest feed, then went
Up to the pond where on his knees he bent,
The broad rim of his hat with water filled,
Which he then drank, his burning thirst thus stilled.

The pond's shore he left gratefully behind,
His heavy eyelids him of sleep remind,
To have a restful sleep in soft grass-bed,
Upon a molehill laid his weary head.

His dreams carried him back from whence he came,
He held in his embrace the trembling frame
Of sweet Helen, but when to kiss her tried,
A thund'rous clap roused him all terrified.

He looked around the field with startling eyes,
Tempestuous clouds — he saw — o'erhung the skies,
So sudden did the thundershower grow,
As his own life a-sudden had turned to woe.

The world was clad in a most pitch-dark hue,
It thundered loud, God's arrows, lightnings flew.
The channels of the clouds seemed ope to be:
The water of the pond foamed like a sea.

John, of his fur cloak turned the inside out,
Leaned on his staff, long and strong and stout.
The broad rim of his hat he turned down,
The storm he viewed thus with an icy frown.

As sudden as the storm had come it went,
As quickly it had all its fury spent.
On wings of wind the clouds were blown away:
A beauteous rainbow illumines the day.

John shaketh from his cloak the drops of rain,
And after that he starts his walk again.
When on that day the sun lay down to rest:
John would not yet his two feet's speed arrest.

Still on he trod, into the forest-heart;
His creaking steps set birds on wings to start.
He hears the raven's loud, ominous cries . . .
The black bird just had pecked some dead beasts' eyes.

No forest, beast, or raven does he heed:
John Kukoricza never lags his speed.
The pale moon spreads her yellow silvery sheen
All o'er the forest's narrow footpath's green.

VI.

Round midnight must have been the time of day,
When John beheld a light not far away;
Approaching closer still, he found the light
The window of a house was, lit up bright.

When John saw this, he mused this wise: „I think
I sorely need a rest and food and drink,
This surely is a tavern in this wood;
To rest here over night will do me good.“

John was in error though, 't was not an inn,
Twelve robbers had their headquarters within.
The reason why the house was lit up bright
Was, all the robbers were at home that night.

Night, robbers, sword and gun — consider well —
Are things which might of dangers great foretell, —
John's heart was brave and stout, he knew no fear.
He entered, greeting them with loud and clear

Bold voice. „Good evening, Sirs, God bless you all!“
A mighty tumult rose within the hall,
The twelve men rose, they reached for gun and sword;
Thus spoke to him the leader of the horde:

„Thou son of misery! how dost thou dare
Cross o'er this threshold of our hidden lair.
Hast father, mother thou? Hast thou a wife?
Thou wilt not see them anymore in life.“

John's heart, on hearing this, remained serene,
No trace of pallor on his face was seen.
The leader's threat had left him selfpossessed,
This is the answer he aloud expressed:

„Who has for aught in life something to fear
„Is wise if to this place he comes not near;
„But life or death, to me, are all the same,
„I care naught who you are, I boldly came.

„And, therefore, if you can, then let me live,
„And for the rest of night some shelter give,
„But if you think 'tis best that I should die
„Here! strike the blow! I will not raise a cry.“

Said it all quietly and then stood still.
Amazement does the dozen robbers fill.
The chief spoke up, — but first he nearer drew, —
„List', brother, I've to say a thing or two.“

„Thou art as brave a lad I ever knew;
„God made thee for a robber, good and true,
„Life is despised by thee, death fearest not,
„We need thee, come, and cast with us thy lot.

„To steal, to rob, to kill, that is our fun,
„Our prey 's the richest by thieves ever won;
„These barrels are full of gold, just look around,
„Come, lad, have we in thee a comrade found?“

Ludicrous thoughts his quick brain vivified,
Apparently good-natured he replied:
„This day is of my woeful life the best,
„That I am yours, this handshake shall attest!“

„That still it better be“ — the leader cried,
„Let's now the bumpers fill, we're well supplied
„With splendid wines from cave of priests we stole,
„Let's see the bottom of our flowing bowl.“

They did. The bowl coursed round and round again.
Wine made their heads the churchyards of their brain.
Our John took carefully but frugal sips,
Though urged to drink, he only wet his lips.

The wine brought sleep to the twelve robbers' eyes,
— The very thing on which our John relies, —
When to the right and left dead-drunk they fell,
John to himself said thus: „This goeth well.

„Good night to you, you sleep here, I suppose,
„Till angel Gabriel his trumpet blows!
„Revenging hundred innocents you slew
„I now shall bring eternal night to you!

„Now for the barrels of gold, I'll fill my bag,
„Which I then home, to thee, sweet Helen, drag.
„No more thy mean stepmother's slave thou'lt be!
„I take thee for my wife, 'tis God's decree!

„Right in our hamlet I'll have built a house,
„And into it I'll lead thee as my spouse.
„There we shall live, life's cares behind us leave,
„As lived in Paradise Adam and Eve.

„But oh! my God! my Lord, what do I say?
„I take with me these robbers' cursed prey?
„Each piece of gold I find must be blood-stained,
„With wealth like that no bliss was ever gained.

„I shall not touch this gold; no, not a piece;
Did I, never my conscience would have peace.
„Bear bravely, Helen dear, life's struggle and strife,
„To God above entrust thy orphaned life“
,

When through with his soliloquising speech,
John came out with a burning light, to each
Four corners of the roof applies the light;
Up leaped the angry flames into the height.



A second, — and the roof 's a ball of fire,
The flame's red streaks always leap high and higher,
The smoke had turned to black the sky's clear blue,
The bright moon of before showed pallor's hue.

The heat, the smoke, the bright glow of the flame
Aroused the owls and bats and forth they came,
Their flight disturbed as on their wings they rise
Sways e'en the twigs of trees of larger size.

The first rays of the rising sun threw light
Upon a smoking pile, a ghastly sight
Behold as through the wreck'd window they peep:
Twelve skeletons, charred, lie there in a heap . . .

VII.

Throughout the world he roamed, through many a land,
He had forgotten e'en the robber band,
When, all at once, before him dawns a light,
The sunrays falling on drawn sabres bright.

A line of fine hussars came up the road,
Their swords it were which in the sun thus glowed.
The horses which they mount neigh, rear and prance,
Proud of their charge they seem, step high and dance.

When John beheld them as they nearer drew,
His heart beat fast and faster still, he knew
Their world-wide fame. He mused and sighed: „Ah, me!
Could I enlist, how happy I would be!“

And when the soldiers had come nigh, he heard
The leader say to him, — how his heart stirred, —
„Look out, my lad, thou'lt step yet on thy head,
Why art thou by such sorrow overspread?“

John sighed, but said: — encouraged by the sight —
„In all the world I am the saddest wight.
If you would let me be one of you, I . . .
I'd dare look in the midday-sun's bright eye.“

The leader said: „Consider well, my boy,
We do not go just now feasts to enjoy.
The Turk broke o'er the French. The French man our friend,
That's where we go! Our allies to defend!

„Why, Sir, this is still more so to my taste.
Pray, let me in the fighting line be placed;
Do I not kill, my sorrow killeth me,
To war! to fight! to kill! I go with glee.

'Tis true, I rode a donkey until now,
— A stepherd I have been, — but you'll allow,
A Magyar I! all Magyars ride of course,
For us created God the saddle horse!“

John said much with his flowing speech, but more
E'en said his fiery eyes. The hussar corps
A liking took to him; with welcome cheer
Received him then and there; a volunteer.

It would be fun indeed, could it be told
How John felt in his trousers: red with gold,
And when his cloak upon his shoulders fell,
The bright sword drew with proud and joyous yell.

When John into the saddle sprang, his horse
Would kick sky-high; he did'nt mind, of course,
Sat in the saddle secure with grace and ease,
No earthquake could him from his seat release.

His comrades loved his manners and his ways,
Would never stop his strength and beauty praise;
Where'er they went and would in quarters lie,
Departing thence, the girls for him would cry.

The truth about John and the girls is this:
He found not one of them as fair as his
Sweet Helen was, all o'er the world he met.
No peer of her on whom his heart was set.

VIII.

The army marched and marched, far, very far,
And reached the centre of the land of Tar,
The dog-faced Tartars lived within this land,
The Magyars knew great danger is at hand.

The dog-faced Tartar's King spoke thus: „Hussars!
How dare you come into this land of Tars?
To have come here, ye madmen, was too rash;
Do you not know, we feed on human flesh?“

The Magyars' fright was great. A hundred they,
Four hundred thousand Tartars' easy prey.
Good fortune 's theirs, a righteous Moorish King
— The Tartar's guest, — the needful help doth bring.

The Moorish King was quick to take their part.
He knew the Magyar people's noble heart.
He travelled once in Magyarland, where he
Enjoyed the kindest hospitality.

The Moorish King had not forgotten this.
To save his friends he felt his duty is.
He took his friend, the Tartar King, aside
To pacify him with this speech then tried.

„My great, good friend, don't hurt this people here.
They will not harm your land, you need not fear:
I know them well. To let them pass your land,
As token of our friendship, I demand.“

„For your sake, comrade, I shall let them go,“
— The Tartar King replied; — „I shall bestow
My help on them, to pass safe through my land,
And everywhere receive a helping hand.“

Indeed, no harm had come to them, 't is true,
Still, they were glad when they had said adieu
Forever to the land where they could fare
On naught else but on figs and flesh of bear.

IX.

The hills and vales of Tartar-land, — did they
Look for the Hussars, — found them far away;
For they had reached great Talyanland and marched
On forest roads by rosemarry-trees arched.

Naught happened there at all that needs be told,
Except that they encountered bitter cold.
For there 't is always winter as we know,
Our men marched o'er eternal ice and snow.

But Magyar blood flowed in their veins, and so
However cold, they bravely onward go.
To warm themselves a bit, what did they do?
Their horses bore on their own backs! That's true!

X.

And thus they came into the land of Poles,
Then into one the Indian controls.
For France and India are adjacent lands, —
The dangerous road between them though commands

The greatest courage, as you'll see from this:
The centre of the land but hilly is.
But then the hills grow step by step, — so high
That at the borders they reach to the sky.

Of course, the army here perspired much,
The men took off their cloaks, neckties and such.
By the eternal! Was'nt the burning sun
Away from them but just an hour's run?

They did not eat aught else but chunks of air,
It was quite hard, each man bit off his share:
How they obtained their drink was really fun:
They wrung a cloudlet and the trick was done.

They finally had reached the mountains' top.
It was so hot, that they were forced to stop
To march in day-time, so they walked at night,
This too was dangerous, their horses might

— They feared, — e'en stumble o'er the shining stars.
— Stars in a rider's way, his progress bars; —
John mused: „Whene'er a star shoots from the sky,
„— 'T is said — it means a human life must die.

„Thy fortune 'tis, mean step-mother below,
„That I which is your life's star do not know.
„For if I did, you'd torture her no more,
I would kick your star out of heaven's door.“

Then the descent began and soon the land
Would into fields of wide lowland expand,
The heat abates with each step they advance,
And ceases when they enter into France.



XI.

France is so fine a realm, she justifies
Her name: a new Canaan, a paradise.
The sweet tooth of the Turks ached for the land,
They reached for it with thievish, murderous hand.

When our Magyar Hussars arrived, they found
Them hard at work — the robbers — all around.
They robbed the church, the altar and the grave,
And stole the wine from cellar and from cave.

Found burning cities' flames light up the sky
And countless dead and wounded meet their eye.
The King was driven from the royal quarter,
And stolen his beloved, only daughter.

Our men thus found, just by a lucky chance,
The homeless, roaming, exiled King of France.
And when the Magyar Hussars met him thus,
They shed for him a tear, real dolorous.

The exiled King thus spoke to them: „Is not
„— My friends — my share in life a cruel lot?
„With Darius' wealth my treasures could compete,
„Extreme want is now mine in my retreat.“

To cheer him up, the leader said to him:
„Don't worry, King of France, we are in trim,
„We'll meet the heathen horde, we'll make them dance
„For daring thus to treat the King of France.

' ,Tonight we'll take a rest, we need a rest,
„The road was long ; we feel somewhat depressed;
„To-morrow morning when the sun shall rise,
„We'll reconquer for you your Paradise.“

„But how about my child, my daughter fair,“ —
Laments the King, — „where is my daughter! Where?
„A Turk carried her off; upon my life!
„Who brings her back receives her as his wife.“

By this fine speech the Hussars were inspired,
The heart of each with golden hope was fired.
One great resolve causeth each heart to stir:
I'll bring her back or else I'll die for her!

John Kukoricza was the only one
Whose mind, — from what he heard, — no fancies spun.
John's mind was wandering, far, far away . . .
He thought of sweet Helen, his darling fay.

XII.

As is his wont, next morn the sun arose,
But ne'er yet did he witness scenes like those
He saw that morn the moment he appeared,
Just as the bars of th' earth's horizon cleared.

The army bugle sounds, the trumpets blare,
The boys are up and for the day prepare.
Their swords are bright and sharp, and then of course
Well groomed and saddled is each Hussar's horse.

With might and main the French King would insist,
That he too would them in their fight assist:
The leader though, a thoughtful man and wise,
Thought best to give the King this sound advice:

„Not so, my gracious King, you stay behind,
Age has your strength and vigor undermined.
I know that still to you your valor 's left,
But what's the use, if of your strength bereft?

First trust in God, then us, that's all, I pray,
We pledge ourselves! ere over is the day
We'll rout your foes and from your lands have thrown,
And you'll resume your ancient royal throne.“

The Hussars then into the saddles spring,
Go forth the Turk to find; they shout and sing.
A herald send ahead to tell the Turk
To be prepared for this day's heavy work.

The herald returns. The trumpets sound a blast.
One mighty cheer! The fight is on at last!
The clash of steel, the Magyar's lusty yell,
Their war-cry is which does of valor tell.

They drive their spurs into their horses' flanks,
The earth vibrates as onward rush the ranks.
Or was it, that the earth's own heart beats loud,
Aghast at deadly blows dealt by that crowd?

Seven horses' tails adorn the Turkish chief.
His pouch is big enough — is your belief —
To hold a barrel of wine, his nose is red,
Looks like a ripe cucumber, — people said.

The awful-bellied Turkish Chief gave then
The sign for the assembling of his men.
The Turkish force lined up as if at drill,
When our Hussars rushed at them with a will.

That rush howe'er had not been children's play;
Terrific was the turmoil of the fray.
The fighting Turks perspired their very blood,
The green field soon was soaked by red sea's flood.

O, holy smoke! The day was hot! O my!
The Turks' dead bodies lay a mountain high!!
The mighty-bellied chief though still alive
Tried John to reach with his sword's vicious drive.

Our John did not regard this as a joke;
Parried the thrust and to the Chief thus spoke:
„My friend! thou art too big for one, let's see,
Can not this blow of mine make two of thee?“

He did what he had said that he would do,
And actually cut the chief in two —
The two halves fell from the perspiring horse
To right and left neath John's blows mighty force.

Their chief's fall made the coward Turks affright.
They quickly turn around and took to flight.
They ran, and even now they still would run,
Had our pursuing men the race not won.

Our men came up to them; a carnage spreads,
Dandelions inbloom like drop their heads.
One only Turk escapes, that is he tries,
Our Kukoricza John after him flies.

It was the Pasha's son who sought by flight
To save himself; there 's something white
Seen in his lap. It was the French Princess —
Unconscious, in a faint, and motionless.

It was a while till John had him outrun.
„Stop, heathen“ — yelled to him, — „or just in fun
I cut on that mean frame of yours a hole
Through which to hell can pass your worthless soul.“

The pasha's son howe'er would not have stopped,
If not, at last, his race-horse had not dropped.
The horse dropped dead. The Pasha's son began
To plead for mercy, thus his prayer ran:

„Have mercy on me, Sir! brave noble Sir!
If nothing else, my youth should your heart stir
To generous sympathy! O, let me live!
All that I have, for it, I freely give!“

„Keep what you have, your worthless life keep too,
I am too good to kill a scamp like you.
Be off! and tell at home what was the fate
Of the mean robber horde found in this state.“

He then alights, comes to the princess nigh,
Looks into her most beauteous lustrous eye,
Which, coming to herself, she oped amazed,
To John she then a greeting like this phrased:

„My dear rescuer, I ask not who thou art,
I simply say: I thank thee from my heart,
My gratitude is thine through all my life,
And dost thou care, I will become thy wife.“

In John's veins hot red blood, no water, flowed.
His heart beat fast and loud with passion glowed,
Yet, manfully his feelings he subdued,
His vows to fair Helen all other loves exclude.

Most tenderly he to the princess says:
„To thy good Dad, sweet one, let's wend our ways,
Before him we will talk this matter o'er.
And gently he the princess homeward bore.

XIII.

John Kukoricza and the royal maid
Came to the battlefield in the evening shade.
The last rays of the setting sun — aghast —
With bloodshot eyes looked on what here had passed:

Saw nothing else but one great field of death
And flocks of ravens it encountereth.
What it beheld gave not much of delight,
It dropped into the sea to shun the sight.

Nigh to that field there was a good-sized lake
With water crystal pure. The Hussars take
Themselves to it to lave therein and red
The water 's from the blood the Turks have shed.

The Hussars, when all spick and span each man,
To his palace escort the French King then.
The royal home was not too far away;
With ease they reach it ere the close of day.

Just as the army reached the royal fort,
John Kukoricza too arrived at court.
The beauteous princess who walked at his right
Looked like nigh to a cloud a rainbow bright.

When the old King saw her he loved best,
With joy a-trembling fell upon her breast,
He showered kisses on her rosy face
And said, — still holding her in his embrace:

„My happiness is now complete, and now
Let some one call my good old cook, I vow
You all must hungry be; now let us dine,
You, heroes of the day, are guests of mine.“

„My King!“ a voice is heard — „here is the cook!
You need not wait; I the precaution took,
All's ready and in the adjoining hall
A truly royal feast awaits you all!“

The voice of the cook was pleasant to hear:
Like music to the Magyar Hussar's ear.
They did not wait to be pressed very long,
And soon around the laden tables throng.

As merciless as with the Turks they were
They with the dishes dealt which they found there.
No wonder, they had grown hungry indeed:
All day at work on their heroic deed.

Around and 'round had gone the well-filled bowl
The King arose and from his lips then roll
These words: „Ye heroes brave, draw near, I pray,
Because of great import is what I say.“

The Magyar Hussars with attention list,
None would a word of the King's speech have missed,
Who first pours down a drink, his throat then clears,
This is the speech which then the company hears:

„First tell me what's thy name, young hero brave,
Who my beloved daughter's life didst save?“
„John Kukoricza is my honest name,
'Tis rustic, true, I bear it with no shame!“

This was John Kukoricza's prompt reply.
Still prompter these words from the King's lips fly:
„I now re-christen thee! Henceforth thy name
As Childe John shall be known, I now acclaim!“



„Childe John, thou savedst my daughter's life to-day,
Thy bravery deserves the richest pay.
Make her thy wife, when as my son art known:
I in thy favor shall resign my throne.

„Since I am King, many a year has flown,
And, as you all can see, I've hoary grown.
The royal cares weigh heavy on my head,
He shall be King who doth my daughter wed.“

„I place upon thy brow my royal crown,
I only ask that thou, when I step down,
Assign to me right here a room where I
Might live in peace near thee, until I die.“

This was the speech the Magyar Hussars heard,
The hearts of all were with amazement stirred.
The words our John most forcibly impress,
He tries his heartfelt thanks thus to express:

„I thank you, Sir! I do not merit though
The kindness which on me you bestow.
Though to your goodness I'm most sensitive,
I must refuse the rich reward you give.

„In a long story I would have to tell
The reasons which my „I can not“ compel,
The telling of the story would intrude
On your patience and I hate to be rude.“

„Speak up! tell us thy reasons, one by one,
We'll gladly listen to thy speech, my son.“
The King to John encouragingly said,
Who then before them his life's story spread.

XIV.

„Well, how shall I begin? And, first of all
Why people me „John Kukoricza“ call?
A foundling I, — was in a cornfield found
And Kukoricza call myself was bound.

A wealthy farmer's kind, good-hearted wife
— 'T was often told me in my later life —
On passing through the field heard baby-cries,
And in a nearby furrow she espies

Poor me, wrapped in a rag and crying loud.
She took me up and to herself she vowed:
„Poor waif, I have no children of my own,
As my adopted son thou shalt be known.“

The good old woman had a husband though,
Who was not pleased and his dislike would show,
Whene'er he saw me in her care, he'd swear
Blasphemous curses which the household scare.

She tried it hard his wrath to pacify:
„Stop being angry, Dad, tell me: could I
Leave him abandoned in that field to die?
Would mercy have on me our Lord on High?

And then, dear Dad, he will be of good use
Around the farm. Cows, oxen, sheep and ewes
Need overseers; when grown up he'll repay
With good work what we do for him to-day.“

Somehow she wins him o'er and by degrees
He yields, but although I tried hard to please
He never liked me. If in aught I failed,
With whip and cane I promptly was assailed.

'Midst working hard and thrashings had I grew;
Of joys and pleasures I but little knew.
The only bliss which for my life's ills paid
Was: in our village lived a sweet, blonde maid.

The maiden's mother soon stepped in her grave,
Her father took a second wife, and gave
A stepmother to her, and then he died.
To that stepmother thus her life was tied.

That maid has been my joy amidst my woes,
Upon my thorny life the only rose;
I loved her, by her sight I was enthralled,
The orphans of the village we were called.

E'en as a boy, could I to her be nigh,
I would not have preferred a piece of pie.
The Sundays were my only days of joys,
I could then play with her amidst the boys.

When I had grown a good-sized lad to be
And felt to have a heart which warmeth me,
And I could kiss her: Well; for me the world
Could crash and into nothingness be hurled.

Her wicked stepmother oft punished her,
— May God ne'er pardon her, — I tell you Sir,
I often had to come to her defence,
My threats alone checked this wife's violence.

From bad to worse too went my own affairs,
My dear old benefactress died. Death spares
Not e'en the best; she found me and to me
A mother good and true had tried to be.

Hard is my heart, in all my life I ne'er
Shed many tears, but at her death, despair
Seized me, my feelings I could not restrain,
The tears I wept were like a shower of rain.

My sweet Helen, my blonde-haired darling, too
With sorrow genuine shed not a few
Most heartfelt tears. The dear departed soul
Had been most kind to her, did oft console

Her in her misery, would often say:
„Just wait! I'll make you each other's one day,
You shall be man and wife; and I declare
Our village ne'er will see a finer pair.“

And sorely we the happy days await.
She would have brought about our married state,
(The dear old soul e'er kept her given word,)
Ah me! she died, and now is sepulchred.

And so it came about that when she died,
We two were forced our hopes to cast aside.
Still, while our hopeless cause we would deplore,
We loved each other more than e'er before.

But God Almighty willed it otherwise:
Our only bliss — to meet — He e'en denies!
Some of my flock I once let go astray,
My master thereupon drove me away.

To my beloved Helen with tearful eye
And throbbing heart I said my last good-bye.
I wandered through the world without an aim,
Until at last a soldier I became.

I never told Helen, that she remain
My own sweetheart until we meet again.
I never told her I shall faithful be,
No pledge was needful for our loyalty.

Give up all thought of me, thou fair princess,
Because if sweet Helen I can't possess,
This heart of mine on no girl will be set,
Should even death to call for me forget."

XV.

This is the story which our brave John told,
His hearer's hearts it could not have left cold.
The princess' face is all suffused with tears,
From pity and regret at what she hears.

The king then says to him: „Dear boy, I see,
Thou can'st not marry her, thou art not free;
I want to pay, though, my gratitude's debt.
With a refusal I must not be met.“

The king then opes his treasury's big door,
And for a servant calls. With precious ore
The biggest bag — as much as it can hold —
Is filled. John ne'er in his life saw so much gold.

„Well, John,“ the king then said, „thou saved her life,
But as thou can'st not make of her thy wife:
This bag of gold shall pay then what I owe,
Good luck to thee and thy bride it bestow !

„I would detain thee, but I know 'tis hard
Thy prompt return to thy love to retard.
Thy comrades must remain, thou go, my boy !
I want them first some feasts I'll give enjoy.“

The king had guessed aright our brave John's mind:
To start at once for Helen's home he pined.
He bid tender good-byes to all around,
And in a boat he'll soon be homeward bound.

The king, his friends, all took him to the sea,
He heard all kinds „good-bye!“ „Good luck to thee!“,
Until the boat in distant fog was lost
Loud cheered for him the hussars and their host.



John heard the speech but did not seem to care.
A flock of storks he saw high in the air.
It was in autumn days, — they migrate, — and
These birds then surely come from his own land.

With gentlest longing he looked at the birds,
As if they would good news bring him in words.
Good news from her, his sweet Helen, and then
Good news from home he shall see soon again.

XVII.

Just as the sunset of the eve before
Had indicated it, next morn a roar
Was heard, it was the storm-swept ocean's waves
Whipped by the tempest which with fury raves.

As usual when such awful storms prevail,
Great is the fright of those then under sail,
In vain their efforts are their ship to save,
No help! their fate 't seems is a watery grave.

Black, heavy clouds roll o'er the darkened sky,
A thunderstorm breaks forth, and from on high
Shoot fiery sparks: the lightnings awful flash;
One hits the boat, which breaks up with a crash.

Dead corpses and the debris of the boat
Upon the ocean's waves are seen to float.
But what has been the fate of John? Did he
Too find his grave within the angry sea?

He also was to his death mighty nigh,
To save him, help came to him from the sky,
And rescued him in a most wondrous way,
So that he did not drown that awful day.

A rising wave had caught him and it bore
Him high and nigh to where the thick clouds soar,
There, with a jump he on one of them lands
And holds on to that cloud with both his hands.

And he held on and did not let it go.
He saw it drift towards the shore, and so
He watched, when near to land, then in a whiff,
He jumped upon the summit of a cliff.

He first then prayed to God, his thanks he gave
For letting him escape a watery grave.
That he his treasure lost he did not care,
His life was spared, the gold with ease he'll spare.

And then upon that cliff he looked around,
Naught else except a griffin bird-nest found.
The bird just then its brood fed, he saw plain,
And lightning-like a thought flashed through his brain.

Most cautiously and unseen, and not heard,
He drew near and then jumped upon the bird.
He boldly drove his spurs into her sides,
As swiftly through the air he on her rides.

The bird tried hard and tried with might and main
To throw him down and thus her freedom gain.
But John sat there as if held by some screw,
His hands holding her neck, and on they flew!

And on they flew! God knows o'er what strange lands.
One day, just as the sun his first rays sends
To earth, he saw just what was his desire:
It illumined his own hamlet's church spire.

God's bliss was his when he that church espied.
To stop his tears of joy he vainly tried.
Just then the bird, to John's greatest delight
Descended for a rest from her great flight.

Upon a hill-top he got off from her,
The bird could hardly breathe, could hardly stir.
He left her there in her exhausted state,
And to his home, lost in deep thought, went straight.

„I bring no wealth and poor as I did start
I bring to thee my faithful, loyal heart;
But this suffices, sweet Helen, I trow
Thou'lt welcome me lovingly anyhow.“

With thoughts like these he comes to his home near.
Loud cries and wagon rattling strikes his ear,
The clang and bang and noise is general:
The people hold their vintage-festival.

He looked not at who to the vineyards went,
He passed to all of them indifferent.
And through the village he just walked to where
He knew had lived Helen, his sweetheart fair.

Upon the porch, he felt his hands to shake,
He hardly dared a decent breath to take.
He plucks up courage, entering, he sees
All strangers where he thought his Helen is.

„Maybe I'm mistaken,“ to himself he thought,
The while his hand again the latch-string sought.
A buxom woman, with kind sympathy
Asks him: „Good man, whom do you wish to see?“

John told her who he is. She breaks in though!
„O, bless my heart! the sun had tanned you so
„I did not know you first. Come in! Come in!
„I am surprised! Let's talk! But where begin?“

„Come in! God bless you John! You've changed indeed“
— Into the sitting room she does him lead,
And when he in her cosy armchair sat,
She said: „Now, let us have a friendly chat.“

„Have you forgotten me? O, what a shame!
I am the neighbor's little girl who came
To see Helen so oft; do you know how“.
„The first thing tell me, where is Helen now,“

John breaks into her speech. The woman's eyes
Are clouded by the tears which in them rise,
„Where is Helen? Oh, Dear!“ — she slowly said:
„Poor Uncle John, our sweet Helen is dead.“

'Twas well he did not stand but sat secure,
The dreadful news it would have felled him sure.
He would not do else but grasp at his heart,
As if to crush the pain which made it smart.

He sat awhile mute, stunned, lifeless, it seemed;
And then he said, — he spoke as one who dreamed:
„Tell me the truth, she is to some one wed.
Let her be whoso's wife, but oh! not dead!

„I could at least once more see her! If so,
Less painful then to bear my awful woe.“
The tears a-flowing from the woman's eyes
Howe'er could not the dreadful truth disguise.

XVIII.

John's head bends to the table from the blow,
The fountain spring of his tears freely flow;
What he then said, — his voice broke by woe —
Sounds as spoke he to himself slow and low.

„Why did I not fall 'midst the battle's strife?
Why to the sea I did not yield my life?
Why was I born at all? That cruel fate,
With thunderous blows shall make it desolate?“

Slow, by degrees his grief grows less severe,
— As had he fallen asleep it would appear —
„How did my sweetheart die? What ailed my rose?“
He gently asked, looked up and listened close

To the young woman's tale. „List! No disease
Killed her, but her stepmother's cruelties.
The old witch, though, paid for her meanness, she
Died as a beggar in great misery.

Your sweet Helen constantly called for you.
„My dear John“ was the last breath which she drew:
„My darling John, 't is you alone I love,
We shall united be in heaven above.“

Then to her endless sleep she closed her eyes,
Not far from here the graveyard where she lies.
All the village to her interment went,
And at her grave tears of deep sorrow spent.“

The woman then escorted him to where
His sweet Helen had been laid by, and there
She left him with his grief. Heartbroken he
Before that holy grave fell on his knee.

All mute, his thoughts roamed o'er the beauteous days
When his were still the glowing, ardent rays
Of Helen's eyes, the smile, the heart of her,
Who now is bedded in that sepulchre.

The setting sun paints the horizon red,
The pale moon rises in the sky instead.
And through the autumn mist a sad look gave
On John, who reeling left his sweetheart's grave.

But he returned. Above the grave there grew
A tiny rosebush on which still a few
Sweet roses he had seen. He plucked one rose,
And said to himself, when at last he goes:

„Sweet flowerlet who grew out from her dust,
We two shall faithful comrades be, I trust,
While o'er the world we roam, — You and my grief —
Until my longed-for death brings me relief.“

XIX.

Childe John had two companions on the road:
One was his grief — his poor heart's heavy load. —
The other one 's the good old sword he bore,
Rust covers it, the stains of Turkish gore.

O'er untrod paths he wandered with the twain,
The moon changed oft and changed and changed again,
The wintry earth fair springtime's garb assumed,
He soliloquized thus, -- by grief consumed:

„Tell me, o grief, thou everlasting woe:
Wilt thou to torment me e'er weary grow?
If thou can'st not kill me, then go, tantalize
Some other soul which rather sighs than dies.

I want to die. If thou bringest no death,
I'll see to it my life encountereth
Real danger! Come adventure! Come real strife,
I gladly yield to you my orphaned life.“

And saying this he casts his woes away,
Though, here and there, they still on his mind prey,
— He had hardened his heart, — but still, a tear
They often caused in his eyes to appear.

And then, — his tears would even no more flow;
His dreary life 's a heavy burden though,
He carries it with him into a wood
Where in the road a heavy cart-load stood.



With earthenware was filled the heavy truck,
Which to the linch pin in the mire got stuck.
The potter whipped the horses: „Git up! go!”
He yelled a-whipping them, 't was no use though.

„God bless you, Sir, good day!” John to him said.
The potter looks at him, from wroth all red,
And angrily responds: „The devil, Sir,
Is master here, my horses will not stir.”

„We are not in good humor I can see!”
— „How can a fellow in good humor be?
Since morning I my horses urge to move,
No use, they stick as if glued to this groove.”

„I'll help thee soon enough, but tell me please:
Where leads the road, one to the right here sees?”
John asked and showed a road which crossed the wood,
A few feet to the right from where they stood.

„That road there? Oh! Thou leave that road alone,
No man who ever entered it it was kown
To have returned, and more I shall not tell,
It leads to where a race of giants dwell.”

John said: „Leave that to me; now let us see
How can this truck of thine I move for thee?”
With that he caught the poleshaft and one! two!
With ease, the truck to dry, high ground then drew.

The potter looked amazed and gasped and stared.
To witness strength like that had him all scared.
Regaining calm, his thanks he wished to say,
But John had struck that road, was far away.

John walked and walked and ere long he beheld
The country's outskirts where the giants dwelled.
A swiftly running brook 's the border line,
— 'T was big e'en for a river, I opine.

A giant field-guard stood watching the brook.
When John attempted in his eyes to look
He had to raise his head as would he try
To see the spire of a church, way up high.

When he, the giant guard, saw John come near,
With thundrous voice, — the bellow of a steer —
He yelled: „I see a man crawls in that grass,
My soles just itch and if he tries to pass

I'll step on him"; and bringing down his foot
To crush our John, John took his sword and put
It up so, that the giant stepped on it
And pierced his foot and fell across the pit.

„He fell just as I wanted him to fall“
John, in his mind, said to himself; „the tall
Man's body serves me as a bridge“ and o'er
The body he crossed to the other shore.

He was across before the giant stirred,
Or ere a word or moan of his was heard,
Then with his sword he strikes a mighty blow,
Off goes the head of the much dreaded foe.

The field guard never rose and nevermore
Stood at his post upon that streamlet's shore.
An eclipse of the sun came to his eyes,
The light to see he nevermore shall rise.

The streamlet's water flows and ceaseless flows,
But of the giant's blood the color shows.
And John? Did fortune come to him or woe?
Within a minute or two we shall know.

XX.

John marched ahead into the forest's heart.
The sights he met of which no counterpart
He e'er throughout the wide, wide world had faced,
Made him indeed to look at things amazed.

There was — for instance — here and there a tree
So high, the crown thereof John could not see,
With leaves so big, that one was big enough
To furnish for a grown man's cloak the stuff.

And the mosquitoes grew here to a size,
As if winged oxen flitted 'neath the skies,
John had enough to do and without rest
He minced the beasts with which that wood was blessed.

And then the crows! Oh, my! Were they not big!
He saw one sitting on a far-off twig, —
At least two miles away as John allowed, —
And yet, that crow looked like a big black cloud.

He sauntered thus a-wondering, when lo!
A something makes a deep darkness to grow.
This something was a mighty big, black fort,
The giant king's own favorite resort.

I'll not exaggerate, the doors were great,
As big as, — well — I can not even state,
The doors must have been big, — you'll guess with ease, —
A giant king can not trough small doors squeeze

Himself. John was amazed. He said: I see
The outside here is grand, what then must be
The inside, which to view now is my plan."
Not thinking of the dangers which he ran

He oped the door. The king and his — God knows
How many sons — just dined. Do you suppose
You know what was their meal? You'll never guess.
Some mighty chunks of rocks had been their mess.

When to the dining party John came near,
He thought: „I do not think I shall dine here.“
The giant king — as if his thoughts had read ---
Goodnaturedly? Maliciously? though said:

„As long as you are here, come then and eat;
These rocks here are a good-enough square treat.
If you refuse of our meal to partake
Of you yourself our desert-dish will make.

John did not know if what the king here spoke
Was meant in earnest or was but a joke;
He stepped up and then promptly made reply:
„I never ate such meal, I can't deny,

But you having invited me, I'll try
To be like one of you and gratify
My hunger with the rocks. Now if you please
Break off that rock for me a goodly piece.“

The king broke off a piece. Five pounds it weighed
At least, and grave to John. „Be not afraid“
He said, „Of this small doughnut take a bite,
Next course 's a dumpling, — if your teeth are right.“

„'Tis I who'll make you bite! To bite the dust!
You'll nevermore on man stone-dinners thrust!“
With that John raised the stone and at the king
He let it fly, while loud his voice doth ring.

The aim was good, the giant king is slain,
To right and left is spattering his brain.
John laughs aloud: „You will not entertain
Your visitors at stone dinners again.“

The giants were heartbroken at the sight
Of their king's death and in their sorry plight
Began to weep, — mid sobs their loss bewail,
Each tear-drop of theirs would have filled a pail.

The oldest then addressed our Childe John thus:
Our Lord-King! We implore you pardon us,
Our loyal serfdom we are offering,
But spare our lives and we make you our King!“

„We all assent to what our brother said,
We are your vassals, you are our chosen head,
Oh! do not punish us, we'll faithful be!“
Such was the frightened giants' piteous plea.

Said John: 'Tis well! Henceforth I am your king,
To one condition I however bring
Your close attention. List! I can't remain
Here with you, I leave one of you to reign

Here in my place, I don't care who it is,
But let distinctly understood be this:
If I your services shall ever want
You must all ready be, I count upon 't.“

The oldest giant said then to the king:
„We pledge our fealty! This little thing
Here take, a fife it is, its voice will call
Most promptly to your aid us giants all.“

John put the fife into his bag, not e'en
A-thinking of the triumph which had been
His share. Amidst „God bless you“s and „good byes“
He wanders from the land of his allies.

XXI.

He does not know how long he walked ahead
But he does know the longer he had sped
His way, the darker it grew all around,
Until he could not see at all, he found.

„Did night set in? Did I my eyesight lose?
What can it be?“ John with himself would muse.
It was not night, he did not lose his sight,
But he had reached the land which knew no light.

The land of darkness, where no sun, no star
Shines in the sky. Howe'er this does not bar
John's progress. Carefully he step by step
Goes forward. Now and then a whirl and flap

He hears o'erhead, such as by birdflight made.
No cleaving wings the cause. That land of shade
Had been the witches' home since God knows when!
On broomsticks riding they come to their den.

The witches were to hold a parliament,
At midnight falleth due the great event.
The dark lang's capital contains their lair,
Where they assemble now from everywhere.

A deep cave is the witches' meeting place.
Within the cave a big fire was ablaze.
The opening of a door betrayed the light,
To go towards it John thought is but right.

Most carefully, on tiptoes he drew nigh,
Peeped through a keyhole and tried to espy
What's going on within that cave. He saw
Things which a less brave man would fill with awe.

Of mean old witches a great number's there.
A curious concoction they prepare:
A-boiling frogs, mice, rats and human bone,
Snakes, tales of cats, grass 'neath the gallows grown.

But who could tell it all what John had seen?
It dawned at once on him: this devilish scene
Must end. While in his mind the means he sought
To do it with, there came to him a thought.

He tried to take out from his bag the reed,
With which the giants to call he does now need.
By chance he knocked his hands against a thing, ---
What could it be? he was considering.

He found it was a pile of brooms on which
Had come a-riding through the air each witch.
He grabbed the brooms and hid them far away, ---
A witch without her broom is lost for aye.

Then to the cave came back and blew the reed.
The call his giant vassals promptly heed.
„Thank you my lads! Now break into this hole,
Kill all you find in there, save not a soul!“

There was a hoydido within that cave,
The witches shriek and tried themselves to save.
They seek their brooms, — by flight to reach the air ---
Without their brooms they knew death is their share.

The giants did as they were bid, each man
Got hold of one witch as for life she ran,
With wrothful ire her to the ground does throw,
Her corpse spreads out as spreads a baker's dough.

A thing remarkable occurred. Whene'er
A witch was killed, the darkness of the air
Would yield to light and with each deathly blow
The day would bright and always brighter grow.

The air with almost noonday's light was filled,
The very last witch still was to be killed, —
Our John in her that witch encountereth,
The stepmother who drove his love to death.

„'Tis I!“—cried John—„through whom her mean life ends!“
And boldly takes her from a giant's hands.
She slips however from his hold and lo!
She runs away; and though by no means slow,

Her fight is vain. „Swift as the wind“ — John cries —
„Run after her and see that she too dies.“
His word is law, she soon 's caught by her hair,
With mighty force is thrown high into air.

And thus the old hag's dead body was found
Near John's old home where it fell to the ground.
As all men hated her without restraint
Not e'en the crows would croak for her a plaint.

The land of darkness changed to one of light,
Bright sunshine followed everlasting night.
A bonfire to be lit was caused by John
And all the witches brooms were burned thereon.

Then to his giant friends he bids good-bye,
Appeals to them his hopes to justify;
They promise him his orders to obey,
And he and they then went upon their way.



XXII.

John roamed about, here, there and everywhere,
He felt relieved e'en of his woe and care.
Did he look at the rose pinned to his breast
It did him not with painful thoughts molest.

He bore that rose, he bore it near his heart.
— Plucked from fair Helen's grave, it was a part
Of her sweet self, — to look upon that rose,
Brought to his mind sublimely sweet repose.

He strolled and roamed. The sun which had shone bright,
Was way down in the West, a beauteous sight
Of scarlet twilight illumined the sky. — —
The pale moon's yellow tinge appears on high.

He strolled and roamed, — the moon too had declined. —
At dead of night, exhausted, he reclined
His head upon a mound, refreshing rest
To find in good night's sleep his only quest.

He fell asleep upon a grassy heap,
Not knowing even, that where he does sleep
A graveyard is, an old abandoned yard,
The graves of which showed plain their struggling hard

With father time! At ghastly midnight's call,
From open graves — the mounds are yawning all, —
Pale ghosts, clad in white sheets leap forth. The Earth,
It seems, gave to these apparitions birth.

To dance, to sing the crowd of ghosts began.
The earth is trembling 'neath their feet; that can
However not disturb John in his sleep,
In peaceful dreams he rests upon that heap.

A passing ghost espies him lying there.
„A man!“ „A man alive!“ yell fills the air.
„Catch him!“ „Carry him off!“ „How does he dare
To enter our own sacred churchyard square!“

The ghosts drew near, encircle him, when lo!
A call resounds! A cock was heard to crow.
That sound gives notice to the ghosts, we know,
That back, into their graves, they swift must go.

John also woke up from the rooster's call.
He rose, chilled to the bones; above the tall
Grass of the graveyard blew a biting breeze,
He's off; a brisk walk shall his chillness ease.

XXIII.

John walked along a mountain's highest peak,
The first rays of the sun just touch his cheek.
The beauteous sight caused him delight most keen,
He stopped to view this truly pompous scene.

The morning star was just about to fade,
Its soft rays no more any light conveyed,
It died away like an escaping sigh
The moment when the sun rose in the sky,

Rose in the sky ablaze with golden hues
And gently the smooth ocean billows views,
Which billows, so it seemed, were still asleep
While into infinite space rolls their sweep.

The sea was calm, but on its surface sport
Some tiny golden fish of divers sort.
And when the sunrays touch their scales, it seems
That rarest diamonds spend their lustrous gleams.

A fisher's hut stood on the ocean shore,
The fisherman was old, four score or more. .
The man was just about to cast his net
When John addresses him: „Old man! My debt

Of gratitude to you would boundless be,
If you would kindly row me 'cross the sea.
I'd gladly pay you, Sir, but I am poor,
I can you but of heartfelt thanks assure.“

„My son, e'en were you rich, you could not pay,"
— The old man said in kindly, gentle way, —
„Whate'er I need in life: this mighty sea,
My fishing net, will e'er provide for me.

But tell me, my dear boy, what brings you here?
This is the sea of seas; — to make it clear:
It has no other shore, you therefore see
No wealth could make me row across the sea."

„The sea of seas" cried John, „then all the more
Desirous am to reach the other shore.
I'll get across! But how? Oh, well! I know!
Into my famous reed I'll have to blow."

A shrill loud call he gives upon the reed.
One of the giant lads gives promptly heed.
„Can you wade o'er this sea? and if you can
Then wade across with me right now, my man!"

„Can I wade o'er?" — The giant laughs in glee,
„This is no sea, this is a pond for me.
Sit on my shoulder, to my hair hold on,
I'll safely wade across with you, King John!"

XXIV.

The giant carried John with mighty strides,
With each step over many miles he rides.
He carried him three weeks with awful speed,
The other shore to reach though not succeed.

One day, John in the mist of far away
Perceives a something: „There is land!“ with gay
Good humor cries. „We are there in short while.“
The giant answers though „’T is but an isle.“

„An isle?“ asks John, „what isle? some details give.“
„It is the isle whereon the fairies live,
Fair Fairyland! Beyond it is the end
Of all the world and boundless naughts extend.“

„Wilt then, my faithful vassal, take me there?
I am eager to see that land so fair.“
„I can do that,“ his giant guide’s reply,
„Your life though is in danger if you try

To enter Fairyland. Terrific things
The entrance guard and every step brings. . .“
„Just take me there, never you mind my lot,
We’ll see if I can enter there or not.“

Having thus told the giant to obey,
His guide submits, has nothing more to say.
He bore him there and put him on the coast,
Then starts for home and soon to sight is lost.

XXV.

The Fay's first door was guarded by the strength
Of three wild beasts, with claws of half yard length.
With some exertion, true, but John soon had
The three great beasts before him lying dead.

„For one day's work this is enough," John thought.
Sat down upon a bench and some rest sought.
„To night I take the rest I feel I need,
To morrow to the next door I proceed."

He did as he had thought that he would do.
Next day he to the next door nearer drew.
The work which here awaited him 's more hard:
Three fullgrown, fierce lions made here the guard.

He rolled his sleeve up, drew his good old steel,
And soon he made the three wild lions feel
His wondrous strength; the fight was fierce, when o'er,
The three wild beasts lay dead before that door.

His conquest thrilled with eagerness his breast.
Unlike of yesterday, he sought no rest,
But wiping off the sweat which from him pours
He steps up to the third one of the doors.

Oh Lord! Forsake me not! The guard to fight
— It makes one's blood congeal, the awful sight; —
Here, is a dragon-serpent with a jaw
So big, that six live oxen it could gnaw.

John was not only brave, but we shall find,
That he had brains, had a resourceful mind.
He saw, his sword is here of no avail,
He sought a mode the monster to assail.

The monster opened its jaw to pounce upon,
To tear to pieces and to swallow John.
What did he do? He's bound that beast to kill.
Into its throat he jumpeth with a will.

When once within the beast, he drew his knife,
And stabs the monster's heart, that kills its life.
The beast howls out a groan, a moaning breath -
And then lies still when overcome by death.

It took our John additional hard work
To bore a hole through from within. His dirk
Was strong and sharp, he crawleth out soon and
Lo and behold! He enters Fairyland!

XXVI.

In Fairyland the winter is not known.
They live in everlasting springtide's zone;
No sunrise and no sunset has the day
Eternal dawn's soft scarlet hues at play.

The fays and fairies in enduring joy
Live lives which ills or death can not destroy.
They need no food, theirs is a ceaseless bliss,
They only feed on love's inspiring kiss.

The grief here never weeps, it might be though
That joy makes now and then a tear to flow;
And if such joyful tear drops to the earth
It gives down there to a bright diamond birth.

Blonde fairy maids a single yellow hair
Of theirs draw right across the earth, and there
These hairs become veins of that precious gold
Which greedy men as sources of joy hold.

The fairy children weave from beams of eyes
Of fairy maids the rainbows for the skies.
When of sufficient length, then from their home
Are taken to adorn fair heaven's dome.

The fairies have a couch of rose and vine,
Inebriate with joy thereon recline.
The perfumed zephyrs which soothingly blow,
Sweet slumbers bring to fairy fay and beau.



The fairest scene which mortal ever dreams,
Approaches not the splendor which here gleams.
When man the first time kisses maiden sweet:
Then in his dream he might like radiance greet.

XXVII.

When Childe John entered into Fairyland,
Amazed he looked on things sublimely grand.
The roseate hues almost blind his eyes,
He hardly dares to view this paradise.

The fairies are not scared, they do not shun
Him, but with childish glee they play and run
Around; with gentle speech and pleasant smile
They lead him to the centre of their isle.

When John saw how here all with rapture beam,
He woke up as had he been in a dream.
Into his heart came a sense of despair:
There came into his mind his Helen fair.

„Here in this land, — of love sublime the home,
I all alone, alone through life must roam?
Where'er I look is cheer and glee and mirth,
Is there for me no happiness on earth?“

In Fairyland's midst stood a pretty lake,
John does himself to its fair shore betake.
He took the rose which grew on Helen's grave
And to this thought of his expression gave:

„My only gem, part of her heart, sweet rose,
What path to take, oh, do to me disclose!“
With that he casts the rose into the lake
To follow it was just a plunge to take:

When lo! What wondrous sight fell to his eyes!
He saw his Helen from the water rise.
With insane joy into the lake he wades,
His sweet Helen's coming ashore he aids.

The lake contained life's elixir which gave
New life to those who in its waters lave.
From Helen's earthly dust had grown the rose,
Helen herself to life renewed arose.

Most eloquently I could tell you all,
Except the feelings which John's soul enthral
When he his Helen held in fond embrace,
When he with burning lips could kiss her face!

Upon her peerless beauty and her grace
The fairies all with admiration gaze,
Not Fairyland had e'er such beauty seen.
The fays elect him king, make Helen queen!

O'er those delightful folks in Fairyland
— With sweetheart's love caressed by Helen's hand,
His gracious majesty Childe John to day
As their beloved king still holdeth sway.

Of this work 400 copies have been issued in Hungarian, 300 copies each in English and in German, 250 copies each in French and in Italian, all numbered and signed by the illustrator, Álmos Jaschik

Copy No.

43.

Jaschik Álmos

